

“THEY MADE THEMSELVES INDISPENSABLE”:
An Evaluation of Women’s Bravery in the
Office of Strategic Services and Central Intelligence Agency

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ABSTRACT

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Title: *“They Made Themselves Indispensable”: An Evaluation of Women’s Bravery in the Office of Strategic Services and Central Intelligence Agency*

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For the first time in history, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has a woman in four of its highest-ranking positions, with Gina Haspel as CIA Director and with women leading three of the agency’s top directorates. In an agency that has long been dominated by men, this female spotlight shines onto the history of women within the organization as a whole, now that almost 50 percent of the CIA’s workforce is female. This spotlight allows for a newfound look into the path that both men & women have taken up to this point to reach a more collaborative workplace between genders, and more specifically it asks what that path has looked like when combined with the unique work dynamic of the clandestine service.

This thesis highlights the central themes of courage and dedication to service through the stories of several female employees of the CIA and its predecessor, the Office of Strategic Services. The paper focuses on a select group of women whose noteworthy contributions shaped female advancement in American Intelligence. The women included in this report played a vital role in opening the door for current female leaders within the organization, and through a unique combination of determination, willingness to serve, and support of those around them, these women made themselves indispensable.

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To the Plan II Honors Program, thank you for challenging me to take initiative and invest in my own interests. This final thesis project began as the troll under the bridge that I feared, knowing I would have to pay the toll at some point to cross the threshold of graduation. But this thesis has become a gift, a revelation in the addictive properties of learning when an interest leads to a question, leads to a library, leads to a nose pointed firmly into the center crease of a book, to an open laptop at a track meet to “just type a few more sentences while the idea is fresh,” and to conversations where I am suddenly shocked to realize that my own voice is the one I hear relaying terrifyingly specific subject-matter knowledge at a faster tempo than Busta Rhymes’ last rap battle.

To this program that has introduced me to some of the best people, visionaries, professors, mentors, and above all friends, thank you for also introducing me to parts of myself I may have never discovered otherwise.

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To my second reader, Professor Moore, thank you for always supporting me and for caring about the emotional wellbeing of students better than any professor I know. You led my class through World Literature so well my freshman year, and now it is certainly special to cap off my time at the university with another project that bears your support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION

INTRODUCTION

PART I: BACKGROUND

- a. History of OSS & CIA
- b. Roles for Women in Both
- c. Gender Workplace Equality, WW2 - Present

PART II: PROFILES

- a. Virginia Hall
- b. Elizabeth McIntosh
- c. Martha Peterson
- d. Sandra Grimes / Jeanne Vertefeuille
- e. Jennifer Matthews / Liz Hanson
- f. Gina Haspel / Current Unnamed Women

PART III: BOUNDARIES / SOURCES OF GROWTH

- a. Collective Boundaries
- b. Individual Boundaries
- c. Sources of Growth within Agency

CONCLUSION

REFERENCES

INTRODUCTION

“I would be remiss if I did not also note the tremendous pride I take in being the first woman to serve as Director. I would not be standing before you today if not for the remarkable courage and dedication displayed by generations of OSS and Agency women. In roles both large and small, they challenged stereotypes, broke down barriers, and opened doors for the rest of us. I am deeply indebted to them, and I am extremely proud to follow in their footsteps and to carry on their extraordinary legacy.”

-Gina Haspel¹

For the first time in history, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has a woman in four of its highest-ranking positions, with Gina Haspel as CIA Director and with women as Deputy Directors of the Agency for Operations, Analysis, and Science and Technology². In an agency that has long been dominated by men, this female spotlight shines onto the history of women within the organization as a whole, now that almost 50 percent of the CIA’s workforce is female.³ This spotlight allows for a newfound look into the path that both men & women have taken up to this point to reach a more collaborative workplace between genders, and more specifically it asks what that path has looked like when combined with the unique work dynamic of the clandestine service.

¹ *CIA Director Gina Haspel Swearing-In Ceremony* [Speech]. (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.c-span.org/video/standalone/?445861-1/gina-haspel-sworn-cia-director>

² Newburger mentions these women in the 2019 article for CNBC. The women are *DiDi Rapp as Deputy Director for Analysis, Elizabeth Kimber as Deputy Director for Operations, and Sonya Holt as chief diversity and inclusion officer*.

³ Windrem, R. (2019, November 5). Sisterhood of Spies: Women Now Hold the Top Positions at the CIA. *NBC News*.

The term ‘Women’s Bravery’ mentioned in the title of this piece refers to the willingness of women to challenge a traditional gender stigma. This classification of bravery will serve as a central theme to the thesis, because although the trait of bravery in itself exhibits no allegiance to one gender, discriminatory climates in the American workplace and the unique demands of foreign intelligence primed audiences for a new form of bravery, one that arose primarily amidst the prevailing trends of gender bias and the resulting perseverance of one gender group in particular: women. The thesis aims to bring to light the way in which the determination of a few female employees in the Central Intelligence Agency impacted gender inequality in the field of intelligence and opened doors for future women.

Because it could prove nearly impossible to assert any overarching conclusions about all women within the CIA and the exact ways in which the gender gap has shrunk overall, this thesis instead highlights the central themes of courage and dedication to service through the stories of eight standout female employees of the Central Intelligence Agency. Their stories have taken place since the CIA’s inception in 1947, as well as two women whose involvement in the field of intelligence predates the foundation of the CIA, having taken place during the Second World War as part of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). The women mentioned in this work include Virginia Hall, Elizabeth McIntosh, Martha Peterson, Sandra Grimes, Jeanne Vertefeuille, Jennifer Matthews, Elizabeth Hanson, and Gina Haspel. Many of these stories will come from widely respected research reports & books, accounts from the women themselves, and unclassified materials released by the Central Intelligence Agency. While much of the material from personal accounts is subjective, the section featuring the officer profiles will ask the same three questions of each story in order to maintain a level of uniformity.

In order to best evaluate the stories of these women, the overall thesis will ask the following questions: In spite of imbalanced opportunities between men & women in America from the Second World War to present, how were a select few female officers in the CIA & OSS able to distinguish themselves as valuable assets within their spheres of influence, and from what source did their bravery arise? What were the implications of the contributions of these women, and what factors led to the emergence of their stories into the public eye while so many stories remain classified?

The thesis will take the format of a timeline within Part I and Part II, providing Background and Contextual Information in Part I and evaluating the careers of a select number of female officers in Part II. The purpose of these first two sections will be to lay the foundation and overall content for further development and comparison in the final major section, or Part III, of the paper. The second section will ask the same three questions of each of the women about their origins and career defining moments in order to hone in on the individual factors that contributed to the unique influence of each woman on the overall intelligence agency.

The third section, or the Barriers to and Sources of Growth for a select group of women in the CIA, is where the stories of these female standouts will overlap, in evaluating both the internal and external considerations of barriers to female career development and bravery within the CIA as well as the ways in which the particular women in this thesis were able to push past many of those barriers. The final comparison of sources of growth will lead into an observation about the continued pursuit of an equal workplace, and note the existence of many women who stood out and persevered but could not be included in the study for the sake of space.

To conclude, the thesis will revisit the unique experiences of these revolutionary women as anomalies rather than as an extrapolation from the mean. These women set themselves apart

and proved to a wide audience that their gender did not have to be a limiting factor to their career impact, but their stories are not without the influence of luck in terms of timing and location.

PART ONE

History of OSS & CIA

The United States government has always sought to collect information about foreign countries in order to preserve its own strategic position in the world, but it was not until shortly before World War II that any single formal organization existed to carry out the objective of foreign intelligence collection and analysis, and the responsibilities of the resulting organization have continued growing into the present day.

Before any kind of overarching intelligence agency existed in the United States (US), the Department of State, the Office of Naval Intelligence, and the War Department's Military Intelligence Division handled the absorption and dissemination of intelligence information. In 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt sought to combine the overall intelligence activities, and created the Coordinator of Information (COI) within the White House, under the direction of William J. Donovan⁴. Not shortly thereafter, the COI was placed under the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and became renamed as the Office of Strategic Services (OSS).

When the OSS was founded in 1942, the United States had just entered into World War II and the US Government had begun investigating new ways to wage war and gather information about their enemies⁵. The new Director of the OSS, William "Wild Bill" Donovan, organized the OSS as a national intelligence center combining research, covert operations, espionage, technical development, and counterintelligence. Donovan recruited a unique set of individuals and skillsets for his newfound organization, not only developing out the Research & Development branch, but "Morale Operations," a cover name for psychological operations, as well, and he sought more

⁴ *Office of Strategic Services Records*. (2018, December 20). Retrieved from <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/ww2/oss>

⁵ Todd, A. (2017). *OSS Operation Black Mail*. Naval Institute Press.

creative approaches to data analysis than had been used previously. The OSS was limited in scope because of politics within US Government and military leadership in regards to operating territory and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)'s focus on domestic affairs and Latin America. Therefore, OSS covert operations were confined to Europe, Asia, and North Africa, with around 40 offices abroad.

An Executive Order terminated the OSS on September 20, 1945, and the records of the Office of Strategic Services were transferred to the Department of State and a separate organization that was to become the Central Intelligence Agency, founded almost two years later, in July of 1947.

Formed with the purpose of digesting and analyzing foreign policy intelligence, the Central Intelligence Agency offered a more structured approach to continue and transition the work started by the OSS into the post-war period. In the present day, the role of the agency has shifted to encompass "collection, analysis, evaluation and dissemination of foreign intelligence⁶," as well as covert operations. While the OSS was known for its creativity and non-traditional modes of operations, the CIA took on a more conservative culture, as Betty McIntosh, a woman who served in both agencies, mentioned in an interview.

"There was a little bit of bureaucracy [in the CIA], which had set in like rigor mortis up above us, and some people were sort of... they didn't have imaginations... they didn't want to do things like we did in OSS."⁷

The purpose of the Central Intelligence Agency has evolved from the initial format of the OSS, which operated solely during wartime, and instead the CIA primarily serves to interpret,

⁶ The CIA website states the overall purpose of the organization

⁷ "Spy Girl" Betty McIntosh Turns 100 Years Old. (2015, March 3).

collect, and analyze intelligence in order to aid policymakers and to convey information to top US government officials.

Female Work Mobility in the US from WWII-Present

From the time the United States entered World War II to present day, the mobility of women in the workplace has increased exponentially, but a gap in terms of wage distribution between genders still exists in the labor market of the United States.⁸

World War II, in its devastation and widespread mobilization of people across the globe, provided a unique opportunity for women who otherwise may *not* have pursued careers with the same level of influence. As husbands went off to war, many women began taking up jobs that otherwise would have been filled by their male counterparts.

Female participation in the US labor force climbed in the 1960s and 70s, but although women reached 60 percent participation in 2000, female participation rates did not recover at the same rate as those of men following the economic crisis of 2009.⁹ In 2018, the female labor participation rate is over 50 percent, and the unemployment rate for women was actually lower than for men in the US.

As the culture has shifted to allow more women to leave the home for work, female employees are proportionally gravitating towards careers in the health/services industry and the public sector over other industries. In a recent study, women were 50 percent more likely to work in the public sector than men, and a report by Oliver Wyman credits the job security, support of work-life balance, social purpose, and merit-based structure of public institutions.¹⁰

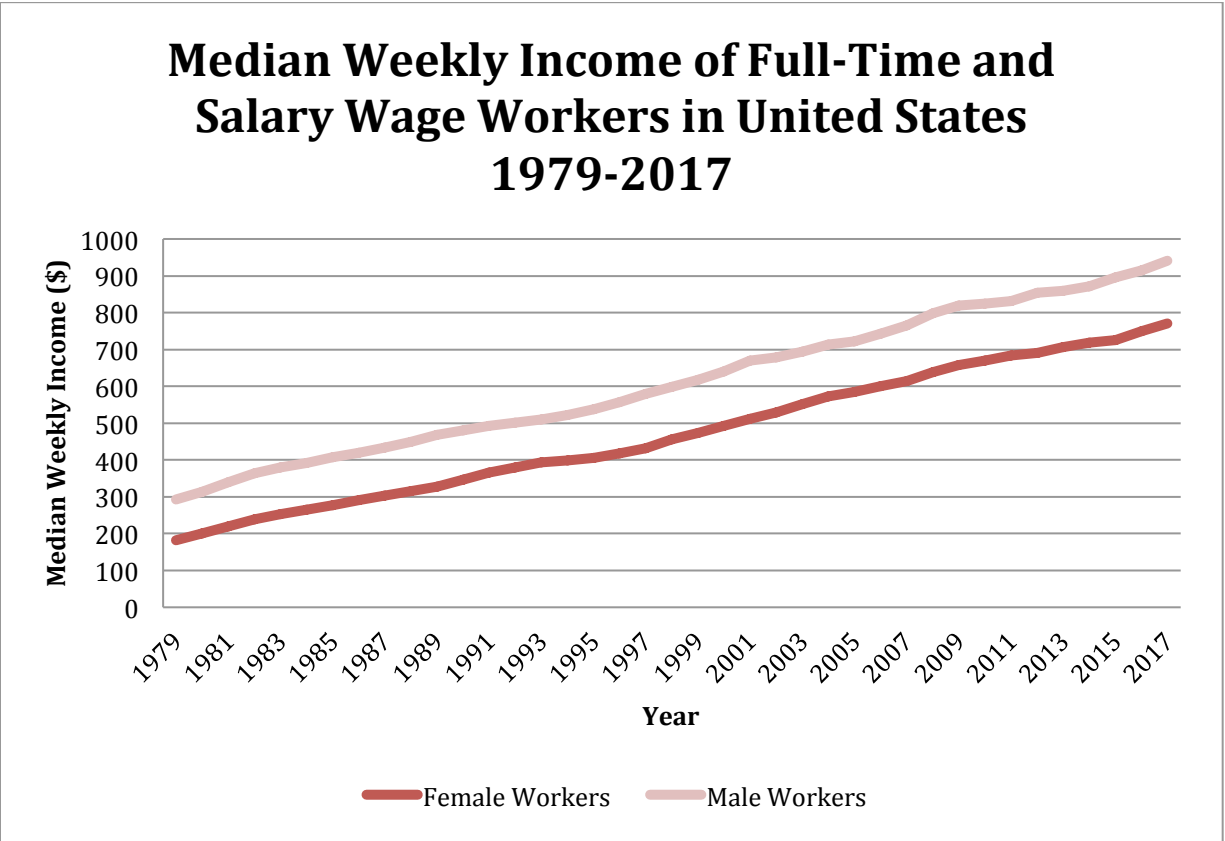
As shown in the chart below, the median weekly income has increased for both men and women for the period from 1979 to 2017 because of economic growth and inflation, but men

⁸ Graf, N., Brown, A., & Patten, E. (2019). *The narrowing, but persistent, gender gap in pay*. Retrieved from Pew Research Center website: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/03/22/gender-pay-gap-facts/>

⁹ Gender Inequality and Women in the US Labor Force. (2019). *International Labour Organization*. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/washington/areas/gender-equality-in-the-workplace/WCMS_159496/lang--en/index.htm

¹⁰ Quest, L. (2016). *Women in the Public Sector: Ahead of the curve but room for improvement*.

have earned a consistently higher weekly income than women, and the overall wage gap persists into 2017.



The Central Intelligence Agency has experienced a different trajectory than the overall working population of the United States in terms of combatting workplace gender discrimination in recent decades, and the following section will evaluate this point further.

¹¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, & US Department of Labor. (n.d.). Median weekly earnings of female full-time wage and salary workers in the United States from 1979 to 2017 (in current U.S. dollars). In *Statista - The Statistics Portal*.

Roles for Women in CIA

Although the Central Intelligence Agency may initially have gained a reputation as an “Old Boys’ Club”¹² and as “male, pale, and Yale,”¹³ the CIA recognized its discrepancies between male and female employees, in part due to the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, and the agency has continued to close the gap between genders and make efforts to recognize the women, or “trailblazers”¹⁴, who have positively impacted the organization.

Early on in the existence of the Central Intelligence Agency, there were extremely few positions for which a woman could submit an application. Many women who applied were limited to the role of a GS-7, or clerical position, and if a higher-ranking position became available to female applicants, there was usually only one opening¹⁵. The OSS hired close to 4,000 women out of their workforce of 21,642, a relatively high portion of the workforce for the early 1940s compared to other industries, but the majority of women worked within the Washington D.C. office in clerical and supporting positions.¹⁶

The predominant pay scale within the US civil service, enacted in 1949, is known as the General Schedule, (GS) and it operates as a step system, with GS-1 through GS-7 as entry-level positions, GS-8 to GS-12 as mid-level positions, and GS-13 to GS-15 as top-level positions. Until the 1980s and 1990s, women were usually limited to apply within GS-7 roles and typically did not experience the same rate of promotion as male employees in similar starting positions.

¹² Almost Half of the CIA’s Employees Are Women -- And They’re Making the Agency Better. (2017, December 6). *Huffington Post*.

¹³ This is a quote from J. Paul Pope, professor at the University of Texas and CIA employee for twenty years.

¹⁴ *From Typist to Trailblazer: The Evolving View of Women in the CIA’s Workforce*. (2019, April 4). Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/collection/typist-trailblazer>

¹⁵ Grimes, S., & Vertefeuille, J. (2012). *Circle of Treason*. Jeanne Vertefeuille speaks of this in her own experience when choosing to work in Helsinki, Finland.

¹⁶ Todd, Ann. *OSS Operation Black Mail*. Naval Institute Press, 2017.

One unnamed female leader who has been working in the recent campaign to break the glass ceiling within the agency made the following comment about her time with the CIA:

“A lot of the things I think women experienced here at CIA, I personally related to so much. In my 30+ years here, I never experienced what I would consider outright discrimination per se. But early in my career, I had managers who made comments like, ‘That was really well done. Good girl!’ or someone on a performance review one time wrote, ‘She’s as good an employee as she is a new mother.’ I don’t think that would happen today. People would really be called out on it. But back then, that was [acceptable].”¹⁷

While the quote above released on the CIA website presents a rather tame version of gender bias within the CIA, a little-known court case in the 1980s brought to light much of the sexual harassment and “frat house” culture within the agency, inspiring further change and diversification of the workforce within.¹⁸

In 2013, then Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, released a government report about “Women in Leadership,” and the results about the inability of majority of women to break the glass ceiling in the CIA took many outside observers by surprise. Albright was chosen to lead the CIA Director’s Advisory Group (DAG) to combat unconscious biases and stumbling blocks for equity of opportunity that have been embedded in the agency. The DAG continues to redefine and clarify the criteria for promotion, increase work schedule flexibility and change the ways managers provide feedback.¹⁵

¹⁷ *CIA Makes Progress on Women in Leadership*. (2018, July 11). Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/featured-story-archive/2018-featured-story-archive/cia-makes-progress-on-women-in-leadership.html>

¹⁸ Ostrow, R. (1994, October 10). The CIA’s Dirty Little Secret: A female agent’s lawsuit has opened a window to the frat house culture among male spies. *Los Angeles Times*.

Overall, the CIA continues to work on its departure from a traditionally male-dominated field of clandestine service, and as part of the shift reflected across the entire labor force within the United States, the CIA is branding itself as an equal opportunity employer, with posts across its social media platforms about standout female officers.

PART TWO

Profiles

It's no secret that the Central Intelligence Agency is highly secretive about its operations, but the stories of a handful of women in the CIA and Organization of Strategic Services have made their way into the public eye over the course of the history of America's spy organizations. Whether because of an important contribution, untimely death, a personal desire to share their story, or a position of visibility in the agency, the contributions of these women each represent important milestones in breaking down stereotypes about the role of one woman at a given time in the field of Intelligence. This section will provide the backgrounds of a few of women from the inception of the OSS to present and argue that each of these women were trailblazers in their own right for females across the two agencies.

In order to best evaluate the complete situation of each of these women, this section will provide context about the period and culture of the agency during the time each of these women served and will ask three questions:

- (1) What is the origin of this woman's determination?
- (2) How did this woman demonstrate determination and courage during her time at the organization?
- (3) Why did she persevere during her career and/or upon leaving the agency?

Any insights into legacy are of course subjective and very few of these women are still alive to provide their own perception of why they chose to persevere, but the women in this work were selected because of the availability of information on their stories in the form of previous research, interviews and firsthand accounts. By looking into the three questions mentioned above, some commonalities of bravery, determination, and humor have already surfaced, but this

section also shows how each woman was not without a supporter of some kind, whether within the agency or in their own family, who recognized each woman's potential and made a point to further that woman's career through the means available to them.

There surely exist many women in the United States who chose not to work at the CIA or within business because of the gender discrimination that existed from 1942 to present. There are also the women included in these profiles, who are unique because rather than accepting the discrimination, these women decided to challenge it, whether consciously or unconsciously, simply by accepting a job with the CIA or OSS and doing it exceptionally well. The stories of many women involved in American Intelligence remain classified, so instead of trying to scratch the surface of all the valuable contributions women have made to these two agencies over the course of history, this paper will ask questions of a select few in consideration of the time and cultural climate that each woman found herself employed by America's spy organization.

Virginia Hall

Virginia Hall was perhaps the greatest American female spy of World War II¹⁹. A one-legged master of disguise, Virginia Hall established resistance networks, helped POWs and downed airmen to safety, and located potential drop zones behind enemy lines for the British and American forces, all while evading the German Gestapo²⁰. Virginia Hall's vivacious and determined spirit²¹ undoubtedly contributed to her employment at the British Special Operations Executive (SOE), OSS, and CIA, but the career advancement of this disabled woman²², who was at first cast aside by the US State Department, was aided by the arrival of the Second World War, the OSS, and an intelligence agency's distinct need for skillsets like those of Virginia Hall.

After living for many years in Europe and working as an ambulance driver in France when Germany first asserted control of Paris, Hall was recruited by the British intelligence Special Operations Executive (SOE) after a chance encounter on a train leaving France¹⁶. It wasn't until after proving herself useful to the British war effort that the American Office of Strategic Services asked Hall to return into the French warzone and begin working for the OSS under the guise of an American journalist stationed in France. After the war, Hall worked for the newly formed CIA as an intelligence analyst in French parliamentary affairs and worked alongside her husband in the agency.²³

¹⁹ Lineberry, Cate. "Wanted: The Limping Lady." *Smithsonian.Com*, Feb. 2007

²⁰ Barbier, Mary Kathryn. "Hall, Virginia." *Encyclopedia of Intelligence & Counterintelligence*, Rodney P. Carlisle, Routledge, 1st edition, 2005. *Credo Reference*

²¹ Judith Pearson relays these facets of Virginia Hall's personality in her book, *Wolves at the Door: The True Story of America's Greatest Female Spy*, based off interviews with Hall's family and work colleagues.

²² Craig Gralley writes about Virginia Hall's denial from the U.S. Foreign Service following the amputation of her leg in his article, "A Climb to Freedom: A Personal Journey in Virginia Hall's Steps" for *Studies in Intelligence Vol 61*.

²³ *Virginia Hall: The Courage and Daring of "The Limping Lady."* (2015, October 8). Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/featured-story-archive/2015-featured-story-archive/virginia-hall-the-courage-and-daring-of-the-limping-lady.html>

Origin

Virginia Hall and her inexhaustible bravery stemmed not only from a caring family and uncharacteristically adventurous childhood for a young girl in the early 1900s, but her bravery originated from a vastly diverse set of work experiences and circumstances, including the loss of her left leg in a hunting accident.

In 1906, Virginia Hall was born in Baltimore, Maryland to an affluent family who ensured that every one of their children had access to a good education, frequent trips to Europe, and an active lifestyle including high involvement in sports (Gralley 4). From an early age, Virginia handled a firearm while hunting with her father on their farm, and she was a tomboy in every sense of the word (Pearson 32). Even after her father passed, Virginia's family would laugh about all the good times they'd had with the man, Edwin Hall, and Virginia always said her dad instilled in her a resiliency and reinforced the idea that she could do anything (CIA).

Virginia Hall stood out from her peers even from the very beginning for her fearless persona, and a senior yearbook description of the character, then nicknamed "Dindy," described Hall as follows:

"The 'Donna Juanita' of the class now approaches. Though professing to hold Man in contempt, Dindy is yet his closest counterpart—in costume. She is, by her own confession, cantankerous and capricious, but in spite of it all we would not do without her; for she is our class president, the editor-in-chief of this book, and one of the mainstays of the basketball and hockey teams. She has been acclaimed the most original of our class, and she lives up to her reputation at all times. The one thing to expect from Dindy is the unexpected."²⁴

²⁴ Pearson includes this excerpt on page 13 of her book, *The Wolves at the Door*, in 2005.

How ironic that Hall would soon find herself in a completely unexpected and unorthodox position within the clandestine service. But perhaps Virginia Hall's willingness to jump at any opportunity and her determination for the unexpected, are the factors that ensured Hall's life path would overlap with adventure through espionage, no matter the setbacks she encountered along the way.

Hall was skilled at romance languages, and she went abroad to complete her college degrees in Europe because she did not feel challenged by her classes at Radcliffe and Barnard (Gralley 7). Upon graduation, Virginia Hall took a Department of State position in the US Embassy in Warsaw, but she moved away from a love interest in Warsaw after he ended the relationship, transferring to a position at the Embassy in Turkey.

When Virginia Hall was hunting in Turkey prior to taking the U.S. Foreign Service exam, a misfire of one of the guns severely damaged her leg, and a gangrene infection to the injury led to the amputation of her left leg below the knee.²⁵ Because of her disability, Virginia Hall was barred from taking the Foreign Service Exam, and after she appealed, used family connections to contact President Roosevelt, and wrote to the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull responded by saying Virginia Hall now qualified only for a clerical position. The amputation of her left leg was certainly not part of the plan Virginia pictured for her budding career, but its contribution to her rejection from the Foreign Service certainly instilled a determination within Virginia Hall to continue proving herself. Virginia rarely disclosed the situation of her left leg to anyone, demonstrating how little she allowed the loss of a limb to impact her life going forward.

How Did She Demonstrate Determination?

²⁵ Barbier, Mary Kathryn. "Hall, Virginia." *Encyclopedia of Intelligence & Counterintelligence*, Rodney P. Carlisle, Routledge, 1st edition, 2005. *Credo Reference*

Although as a young woman she hoped to enter the U.S. Foreign Service, when the State Department denied her application, Virginia Hall was furious and moved to Estonia and Paris shortly thereafter, hoping to continue pursuing her innate desire to be part of the action. She quit the U.S. State Department once she had hit the glass ceiling for women, wishing to seek out new adventures. On her journey out of France into England, Virginia Hall attracted the attention of the British SOE with her American passport, passionate rhetoric against the Nazis and excellent language skills.

Once SOE officers in London contacted Virginia Hall about a potential position, she left her post at the US Embassy and buckled down to endure rigorous training in demolition, clandestine survival, Morse code, map reading, security, parachuting, and the general organization of an underground circuit.²⁶ Many recruits washed up because they could not endure the physical or emotional demands, but Hall excelled and passed the final interrogation test, consisting of grilling questions about her cover, with flying colors.

Virginia Hall continued to show her determination while balancing many different responsibilities while undercover in France, mainly serving to establish Vichy Resistance networks. When the German Gestapo found her out and took over the region of France where she was living, Virginia Hall was forced to evacuate on foot and wooden leg across the Pyrenees Mountains into Spain. She returned a few months later to finish her work and as an agent for the OSS, dedicated to continue the work she had started.

Hall understood how the German Gestapo would punish her if caught, and she also knew of the Germans' recurring rhetoric to "find and destroy the 'Limping Lady.'"²⁷ Virginia Hall

²⁶ Pearson mentions this on page 67 of her book about Virginia Hall. Recruits who did not pass training had to go to an isolated manor in Scotland to wait until the information they learned undercover would no longer be beneficial to a foreign enemy.

²⁷ Perry, J. (2003, January 27). "We must find and destroy her." *U.S. News & World Report*, 134(3), 59.

continued to provide vital information to the Allies from France, disguised as an old woman, and she even wore padded clothing, covered her hair, and changed her gait so as not to arise suspicion.²⁸ Living a secret life was certainly not easy, as Virginia wrote about the struggles of caring for the people she encountered in France but not being able to fully know them or develop relationships with them, thus her time in the war included enduring a bit of loneliness as well.

Why Did She Persevere?

One biographer of Virginia Hall investigates the reasoning behind Hall's resilience by interviewing many of the female spy's colleagues and family members. In the words of Virginia Hall's daughter, her mother possessed an inexhaustible determination for as long as she knew her, but in the pragmatic words of Virginia Hall when asked if she had ever been decorated in the field, she said "No, nor was there any reason for me to be [recognized]."²⁹ Always humble and adventurous, Virginia Hall merely viewed her accomplishments as opportunities to be helpful and active, and her perceptions of her own capabilities were not limited by the physical or societal conditions that hindered many women of the same time period.

This outspoken persona was not well received by all men Hall encountered, least of all one of the first men she worked for in the American consulate in pre-war Venice, who fired her, saying "She is not good material for a career service because she lacks judgment, background, good sense and discriminatory powers. She also talks too much."³⁰ Previous humiliation on the job like this one and a confident view of herself regardless allowed Virginia Hall to respond to naysayers by proving them wrong and taking on even more responsibility.

²⁸ Pearson mentions on page 12 how Virginia Hall died her hair grey and changed her walk to a shuffle in order to fit her old woman character and mask her wooden leg.

²⁹ Page 243, *Wolves at the Door*

³⁰ Page 22, *Wolves at the Door*

Family was a major source of perseverance for Virginia Hall as well. When Hall was recovering from the amputation of her left leg, she said her father appeared to her in the hospital room in Turkey and encouraged her to continue fighting. Virginia Hall had all of her paychecks with the OSS sent to her mother in the United States, and Hall's mother was the only person in attendance when Hall received a Distinguished Service Cross, the nation's second highest medal for valor, from the OSS chief Bill Donovan. The recognition for her service was set to take place with President Harry Truman; however, Hall preferred a small ceremony with no publicity, in part so that she might maintain her cover for clandestine work in the postwar period.

Humor played a vital role to Virginia Hall in the face of loss of a limb, threats against her life, and the like. When the SOE asked Virginia Hall how the evacuation trek across the Pyrenees to Spain had gone, through the snow, McIntosh responded by saying Cuthbert had given her trouble. The SOE responded with: "If Cuthbert is giving you difficulty, have him eliminated." The SOE did not realize that Cuthbert was, in fact, Hall's nickname for her prosthetic limb.³¹

When Virginia Hall was establishing her cover for her first intelligence operation in France as part of the SOE, she brought humor as well. After corresponding with a male editor in the United States to acquire a position as a reporter for the *New York Post*, the man asked whether Virginia Hall was certain she would be comfortable in "such a dangerous part of the world,"³² and all Virginia Hall could do was laugh and respond kindly about her commitment to be careful.

³¹ *Virginia Hall: The Courage and Daring of "The Limping Lady."* (2015, October 8). Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/featured-story-archive/2015-featured-story-archive/virginia-hall-the-courage-and-daring-of-the-limping-lady.html>

³² Found on Page 73 of *Wolves at the Door*.

Elizabeth McIntosh

Elizabeth, “Betty,” McIntosh served in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in “black propaganda,” or a tool of psychological warfare that intends to convince troops and enemy forces that their own country and families are losing motivation for the war effort, and McIntosh served in the Pacific theater, on the other side of the globe from Virginia Hall.

Elizabeth McIntosh was a pioneer in the field of psychological warfare, and her perceptiveness and intuition about how to best coerce the Japanese forces earned her a powerful reputation among the Morale Operations (MO) Branch of the OSS. Fighting what often seemed like an invisible war, armed with pamphlets and written creativity as opposed to guns and ships, the MO team in the Pacific theater is often overlooked in historical accounts of World War II and was even often overlooked by General MacArthur, who led the Allied charge against Japan, because leaders of the U.S. military had their own separate agendas, and left Donovan and the OSS to fend for themselves in Burma and India. In spite of this, the MO team persevered to create content and trick the Chinese and Japanese, and Betty McIntosh even ordered a false surrender to be placed in the bag of a Japanese courier, which led many Japanese to abandon the war effort.³³

Betty McIntosh is unique in the way her legacy for women in the OSS and CIA extended past her career in Foreign Intelligence and onto the page through storytelling. McIntosh authored the book *Sisterhood of Spies*³⁴ to relay information about women in the OSS in World War II, and she continued to remain involved in the CIA, both as an employee and visitor until her death in 2015. This section will conjecture that Betty McIntosh’s passion for female spies and their

³³ Todd, Ann. *OSS Operation Black Mail*. Naval Institute Press, 2017

³⁴ Published in 1998, *Sisterhood of Spies: The Women of the OSS* provides a tribute to the 4,000 women who served the OSS during WWII and includes interviews from over 100 of those women. Elizabeth McIntosh said in a 2009 interview with C-Span that she was “proud to be included among such a group of women.”

stories no doubt arose as a direct result of the tight knit community of friends this woman had as part of the OSS, and this “pixie-like” band of friends she often mentioned would remain close and supportive of one another throughout their lives.³⁵

Origin

Elizabeth McIntosh always had a passion for languages, and after majoring in journalism and learning Japanese at the University of Washington, she was intrigued by a position in the OSS for the opportunity to travel abroad, even though her interviewer could give her no details about the actual position. McIntosh thought she met the recruiter only by chance, when in fact that male recruiter had come to the career fair already knowing exactly who Betty McIntosh was and with the full intention of hiring her for the OSS because of her unique skills.

The opportunity for Betty McIntosh’s position took shape as a result of Director Donovan’s creation of the Morale Operations (MO) branch, an inconspicuous cover name for the branch of psychological warfare, of the OSS in 1943.³⁶ Ann Todd, a friend and biographer of Elizabeth McIntosh, described the MO as follows:

“The people recruited for this latecomer (MO) were of a different ilk from those drawn out of the ranks of Yale, Harvard, and other esteemed faculties who populated Donovan’s Research and Analysis Branch. They were not elite soldiers poached from the regular armed forces or movie stars who flocked to OSS in search of adventure and the chance to make a difference. MO brought in a wave of artists, journalists, and people who were deeply familiar with the languages and cultures of far-flung parts of the globe. Creative types. Professionals, many too

³⁵ Todd mentioned this group of friends, which included the likes of Julia Child, in her book *OSS Operation Black Mail*.

³⁶ Todd, Ann. *Elizabeth McIntosh and OSS Operation Black Mail*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9IH-42ybYs>. International Spy Museum.

old to enlist but eager to join the war, preferably “over there.” The scholars, writers, and artists destined for Asia had, through their own careers and interests, sought to understand the cultures of that part of the world as an end in itself. Now that understanding would be used to find weaknesses in a culture, to attack the unity of that culture, or, as one scholar put it, “to crack the enemy’s culture up, not just crack it open.”³⁷

Betty McIntosh was specifically recruited for her intelligence, creativity, and Japanese language skills, along other similarly qualified women and men. When McIntosh arrived in the Pacific region, she quickly became acquainted with her roommates, which included a few women, a lot of cockroaches, and a few visiting monkeys and iguanas through their window. Betty McIntosh enjoyed the change in culture and scenery from the United States, and that change of pace is mainly what drew her to accept the role with the OSS in the first place.

How Did She Demonstrate Determination?

Taking on a new role within the field of psychological warfare, Elizabeth McIntosh had to be creative in the way she went about forming propaganda for the Japanese. Mrs. McIntosh established the idea of taking the mail of Japanese soldiers addressed to their families and rewriting the messages within, telling tales of the awful conditions and lack of overall morale. The OSS office where Betty worked was never able to measure the precise effects of any of their black propaganda, but Betty led the charge of perseverance and continued to present new ideas to her team to increase their efficacy.³⁸

³⁷ This excerpt is taken from page 2 of Ann Todd’s book, *OSS: Operation Black Mail*, about the career of Elizabeth McIntosh with the OSS that includes first person accounts from Betty about

³⁸ Todd, Ann. *OSS Operation Black Mail*. Naval Institute Press, 2017.

McIntosh also had to enforce ingenuity when trying to gain access to information that she could use to create propaganda, because almost all of the material coming from the war zone went straight to the British in the area she was working. The British “cousins,” as the OSS officers stationed in India called them, were not eager to help the Americans, and Betty McIntosh befriended a Brit by trading her cigarette ration for his captured documents. It was because of this quick thinking that McIntosh was able to begin pushing propaganda into Burma and Japan.

While working for the OSS, Betty McIntosh encountered men who did not approve of the women they worked with, as Capt. Oliver Caldwell of OSS efforts in China said,

“My seven lionesses were nice girls, individually. Three of them were brilliant... [but]... none of them had any experience in psychological warfare, and therefore should never have been assigned to MO in India or anywhere else.”³⁹

In response to harsh words from one male supervisor about the efficacy of Betty McIntosh and her female counterparts, Betty simply called him a “schnook” and continued carrying on “quite nicely without him.”⁴⁰

Why Did She Persevere?

“I made it a habit never to pass up the chance for adventure”(McIntosh). This quote from Elizabeth McIntosh exhibits a zeal for risk-taking that surfaced in her pursuit of languages, work opportunities abroad, and employment in the CIA after returning from World War II.⁴¹ When the OSS was disbanded, Elizabeth McIntosh began working for a Glamour magazine in New York

³⁹ Page 108 of *OSS Operation Black Mail*, and originally quoted by Ibid.

⁴⁰ This is taken from an interview between Ann Todd and Elizabeth McIntosh in 2011, included in the book *OSS Operation Black Mail*.

⁴¹ Betty McIntosh studied Japanese as part of her degree at the University of Washington, as referenced on the CIA website in an article entitled “Spy Girl.”

City, but she found the work dull in comparison to the excitement of psychological warfare she experienced while abroad (CIA). So, it was a desire for excitement and challenge that drew Betty back to a career in intelligence, in spite of the changing structure of the organization and her role within it.

Betty McIntosh viewed herself as an equal with her male colleagues, a stance that was often rare among women at the time she returned to work in the Central Intelligence Agency. In regards to her experience, McIntosh said the following:

“I guess maybe I developed something that helped me. An attitude, maybe. Especially in OSS, I felt I was just absolutely an equal with anybody in the office.”⁴²

Confidence is essential to intelligence work, and perhaps that trait is something many women lacked during the time period because of the disparity between men’s and women’s responsibilities in the workplace. Betty McIntosh hits on something powerful in the quote above, because that confidence she possessed surely opened doors for her within the agency that may have been closed to others who may have doubted the importance and power of their own voice.

⁴² “*Spy Girl*” *Betty McIntosh Turns 100 Years Old*. (2015, March 3).

Martha Peterson

Martha Peterson began her career with the CIA in the early 1970s, during a time when women were still widely expected to follow their husband's career goals rather than their own. Martha Peterson offered a unique advantage as a widow spy during the Cold War, in a position that only came about because she first followed her husband abroad while he served as a Green Beret in Laos and established the network connections necessary to catapult her into her own career.

As the handler of America's most important Russian spy, Tolkachev, during the Cold War, Martha Peterson worked under cover and conducted dead drops of information as the first female spy in the Soviet Union for the United States.⁴³ For two years, Martha Peterson evaded detection by the KGB, Russia's intelligence agency, in part because the KGB's prejudice prevented them from suspecting a woman of carrying out such operations, relieving Peterson of the same amount of KGB surveillance that plagued her male counterparts in the Moscow office. When Soviet officials arrested her on the street for her involvement in espionage and interrogated her in a courtroom all night, Peterson was declared a "person non grata" and expelled from the country back to the United States.

Origin

Martha, or Marti, Peterson was first a scholar and a wife before she ever considered working for the CIA. According to a publication from her undergraduate university, Martha Peterson went to college close to her hometown of Darien, Connecticut to simply "grow up and have a good time."⁴⁴ She met her husband, John Peterson, during her third year of her

⁴³ Peterson, M. (2012). *The Widow Spy*. Wilmington, North Carolina: Red Canary Press.

⁴⁴ Patterson, M. J. (2016). Marti Peterson '67 says she enrolled at Drew "to grow up and have a good time." What happened next was less expected: a life as a CIA agent with assignments in Cold War Moscow and beyond. *Drew*

undergraduate degree. While John was serving the United States military in the Vietnam War, Martha received her master's degree from the University of North Carolina while teaching at a local community college. When the two were married Lieutenant and Mrs. Peterson, Martha was fluent in three languages and had work experience in her own right, yet she travelled to Laos with John to be present with him on his assignment with the CIA.

John Peterson passed away in a helicopter crash in 1972, trying to extract Lao troops from the line of fire, and Martha Peterson's tour in Laos abruptly ended. Devastated and heartbroken, Peterson moved back to the United States and evaluated her career options as a widow at only twenty-seven years old.

Quoted in a Washington Post article following Martha Peterson's deportation from the Soviet Union in 1977, Peterson's neighbors were shocked upon hearing of her career as a spy, describing "Mrs. Peterson" as "wholesome, outgoing, an All-American type, good-natured, ladylike, vivacious, ebullient, friendly."⁴⁵ Even the Washington Post downplayed Peterson's achievements, basing their article only on the release of information by the Soviet Union in Russian newspapers, and American news sources fixated on Peterson's identity as the "Girl Next Door" who delivered poison pills to a Russian spy, rather than as an intelligent woman serving her country and in-fact delivering information, not poison as the USSR hoped to portray.

In addition to her intelligence, colleagues knew Martha Peterson to be gregarious and creative, but when she lost her usual spirit and enthusiasm towards traditional career paths after her husband's passing, it afforded a new opportunity for Peterson to pursue a career in the CIA.

Magazine. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20160620043420/http://www.drewmagazine.com/2013/10/the-widow-was-a-spy/>

⁴⁵ McPherson, M. (1978, June 21). The Girl Next Door Comes in From the Cold. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1978/06/21/the-girl-next-door-comes-in-from-the-cold/744eb489-f645-4c0b-938c-814ab9b9fa52/?utm_term=.8d91b0b28ca4

If not for her husband's death, devastating as it was, Martha Peterson may never have helped the American effort in the Cold War and women within the CIA to the same degree.

How Did She Demonstrate Determination?

In order to even be hired to the CIA in the first place, Marti Peterson had to remain determined and confident in her desire. When she first applied following her husband's death, the male CIA officer who interviewed her said he would only consider her for a clerical position. Martha Peterson was greatly offended, and it wasn't until a friend called in a favor that Peterson was given a more serious interview and eventually hired as one of only four women in the entrant class of officers to the CT Program of CIA training in 1973.

When Martha Peterson evaluated her first assignment, she and her supervisor seriously weighed the considerations of sending a single woman as an officer to the Soviet Union, but many concerns came from male superiors rather than Peterson herself, and after completing a rigorous training set, Peterson was eager to begin her assignment. While ultimately lonely while serving in Moscow, Peterson made a conscious effort to befriend her coworkers, and she spent minimal time in her apartment other than for sleeping, opting instead to spend weekends searching for potential dead drop zones and practicing sleight of hand.

Marti Peterson travelled to the Soviet Union *alone* in the height of the Cold War for a career in espionage in a state with high levels of surveillance on any Americans within the country's borders. Throughout her service, Martha Peterson often felt very lonely, but she had to be extremely careful and committed to a particular way of life so as not to arouse Soviet suspicion. Every time she left her apartment, and even within her apartment, Peterson was conscious of the way her actions might be perceived. When changing outfits in alleys to shake surveillance or reassuring skeptical CIA superiors of her ability to spot that same surveillance,

Marti had to be patient and methodical. When the CIA established Peterson's pattern of no surveillance, she became the immediate choice for delivering packages to TRIGON, one of the US' most important Soviet spies. And even without surveillance early on, Peterson had to be careful not to arouse suspicion when leaving a dead drop for TRIGON, using sleight of hand and other small tricks so as to go unnoticed.⁴⁶ Martha Peterson had other assignments during her time in the USSR that took her back to the United States, meeting with a high level Soviet agent to return to Moscow, where she could meet with him under romantic cover.⁴⁷

When Soviet officials finally captured Peterson on the street, groped her for any hidden microphones, and took her to a courtroom to testify, Peterson also demonstrated her determination on the job when it undoubtedly took courage to hold her tongue and maintain her composure.⁴⁸ Upon returning to the United States, Peterson continued to devote herself to her career within the Central Intelligence Agency, and while she was no longer in the same danger on a daily basis, she worked hard knowing the importance of the support work of all the officers in Washington's headquarters.

Why Did She Persevere?

Marti Peterson's motivation to persevere, first in following and supporting her husband during his tour with the CIA, and later in her own career of espionage, appears to have been facilitated in part by the support of knowledgeable and well-connected friends, by Peterson's sense of humor, and by her desire to leave a legacy for women in the CIA and particularly in the agency's Soviet division.

Friends and connections played a major role in directing Marti Peterson's path following her husband's passing. It was a CIA colleague of her late husband who allowed Peterson to stay

⁴⁶ Hoffman, D. (2015). *The Billion Dollar Spy: A True Story of Cold War Espionage and Betrayal*.

⁴⁷ Mentioned on Page 168 of the *Widow Spy*, by Martha Peterson.

⁴⁸ Mentioned on page 239 of the *Widow Spy*, by Martha Peterson.

with him and his wife in Washington D.C. rather than seeing her to return to her parents' home to Florida. The friend, Tom, encouraged Martha to apply for the CT program in the CIA instead of pursuing a teaching opportunity or traditional female career track.⁴⁹ Tom made the connection to another CIA employee, Hal, who not only pushed for Martha Peterson to be employed in a position with more mobility than a starting clerical role common to women applicants, but he also called in a favor to change her assignment when her initial posting appeared counterintuitive.⁵⁰ If not for Hal, Peterson would have been on a different first assignment than the USSR tour that immortalized her story, and Peterson may not have ever seen her career story released to the public.

Martha Peterson certainly exhibited a sense of humor and creativity, not only in the writing style of her memoir, but especially in the most grueling roles she faced during her career, as she tells the story. While working as a secretary in Laos and living with her husband Tom, Marti found her tasks exceedingly monotonous, so she began adding jokes into the memos that she passed on to the male officer at the next level of analysis, to provide him with a laugh every once in a while.⁵¹ Marti Peterson found a way to turn the mundane into an opportunity, and her early creativity in teaching English to Lao translators and operations assistants during her free time served as an early signal of her interest in finding new windows for injecting a bit of her personality and imagination.

Marti Peterson wanted to ensure a better experience to the women coming after her in the agency. Part of that desire originated from Peterson's experience at the bottom of the CIA totem pole as a secretary in Laos. In her memoir, Martha said the following about her experience:

⁴⁹ Peterson mentions Tom on page 68 of her book, *The Widow Spy*.

⁵⁰ Hal surfaces a few times in Peterson's book, *The Widow Spy*, but this instance appears on page 73.

⁵¹ Peterson later found out that the man who asked her to type the memos on 3x5 cards did not read them, and the author states how the jokes went unnoticed on page 24 of *The Widow Spy*.

“It was hard to be just John’s wife. I was lost without my own identity. I struggled in the office doing the lowest, mindless jobs. I knew I was smarter and had accomplished more than many of the men I worked for. I was irked by their demeaning attitude toward me. John did not treat me this way, but we had so little time together. I learned to swallow my pride and accept that I was an appendage to his career. Carl’s wife, Elizabeth, told me often of her professional struggles in the Agency, where women were not valued as highly as men. I understood what she was saying, but it did not reduce my frustration.”⁵²

As Martha Peterson began her own career in the Central Intelligence Agency, she chose not to tell many people about her past experience as a secretary for the CIA or mention her husband and the connection that opened the door for her career. Instead, she hoped to establish her own credibility, fearing that her colleagues would look down on her again if they assumed Martha received her job in part because she was “John’s wife” yet again.

When Officer Peterson arrived in the Soviet Union on her first assignment with the CIA, she found her reception to be relatively cold and disappointing. A US Embassy employee deposited Peterson at her hotel with only a few words, and Peterson spent the first night alone and uneasy, having experienced the Soviet hotel employees rifling through her possessions while she was away eating dinner after a few extensive days of travel.⁵³ Martha Peterson vowed to make sure new officers from the United States, but single women in particular, received a warmer welcome on their first night in the USSR, and she began taking new arrivals out to dinner in an attempt to improve camaraderie among the CIA’s Soviet Branch.

⁵² Peterson mentions this on page 25 of her book, *The Widow Spy*.

⁵³ Peterson, M. (2012). *The Widow Spy*. Wilmington, North Carolina: Red Canary Press. Page 91.

Sandra Grimes / Jeanne Vertefeuille

Sandy Grimes and Jeanne Vertefeuille were two crucial team members in the CIA Hunt for the mole and Russian informant, Aldrich “Rick” Ames. These two women began their careers at different points in the CIA’s history, but both saw the devastating losses caused by the treachery of Rick Ames, and these women persevered in order to find the culprit for arguably the worst intelligence leak in the agency up to that point.

During the height of the Cold War, the identities of several American spies in the USSR were revealed to the KGB, and the CIA watched as spy after spy were killed or found out by the Russian government. A short list of individuals within the CIA even had access to the list of US agents located in Russia during the Cold War, and the CIA was forced to come to the conclusion that they had suffered a human breach of intelligence within their ranks, otherwise known as a mole.

On April 16, 1985, Aldrich Ames, a senior CIA case officer, walked into the Russian Embassy in Washington D.C. and volunteered to disclose the names of American agents located in Russia in exchange for extensive amounts of money. By the end of his four years as an informant, years which were spent meeting with a Russian diplomat who served as his contact and conducting “dead drops,” or drops of classified information in prearranged hiding places, Ames had been paid close to \$1.88 million by the USSR.⁵⁴

Origin

Jeanne Vertefeuille graduated from the University of Connecticut in 1954 and joined the Central Intelligence Agency in a clerical position for the chance to travel abroad. During her time

⁵⁴ FBI. (2019). *Aldrich Ames*. Retrieved from <https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/aldrich-ames>

at the agency, she worked her way up from the typing pool to serve five overseas tours, specializing in counterintelligence and the Soviet target during the Cold War. Jeanne Vertefeuille loved working for the CIA not only for the opportunity to travel and explore on weekends, but for the ability to get involved in an impactful career. She said in retrospect that upon accepting a position in the Counterintelligence Group of SE Division, she “couldn’t have been happier.”⁵⁵ For personal enrichment, Vertefeuille studied Russian in addition to her job, and as she worked for the CIA, she slowly developed more career goals along the way. Serving until mandatory retirement in 1992, Jeanne Vertefeuille said of her time at the agency,

“Overall, despite a few down periods, I had a successful and rewarding career in the CIA, and would do it all again. I entered on duty as a GS-4, never skipping a grade, and retired as a Senior Intelligence Officer, level three. Promotions do not tell the whole story, however. Along the way, I was associated with some first-class colleagues, whose expertise and work ethic enabled us to meet our goals, and with some bosses who gave me the opportunity to spread my wings. I think of them all with affection and respect.”⁵⁶

Sandy Grimes joined the agency in 1967 rather serendipitously. Having studied Russian language to get out of high school physics, Sandy Grimes said she just wanted a job after graduation during her senior year of college, and when a past boyfriend told her about CIA’s recruitment on campus with the words, “you would make a perfect spy,”⁵⁷ Grimes reluctantly applied. She entered the agency as a GS-06, and through her career worked in the

⁵⁵ *The People of the CIA... Ames Mole Hunt Team*. (2013, April 30). Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/featured-story-archive/ames-mole-hunt-team.html>

⁵⁶ Mentioned on Page 9 of Vertefeuille’s personal story in *Circle of Treason*.

⁵⁷ Grimes, S., & Vertefeuille, J. (2012). *Circle of Treason*. Page 11.

Counterintelligence Group of SE Division, as chief of the Africa Branch, and she served in charge of the Moscow Task Force at the assignment of Paul Redmond.

How Did [They] Demonstrate Determination?

When Sandy Grimes joined the Mole Hunt for Aldrich Ames, she had been planning her resignation from the agency, but quickly decided she could not forgo the opportunity to find out the answer to a question of the CIA's information leak that had been bothering her for years.⁵⁸ For Jeanne Vertefeuille, who was older than Grimes at the time, Jeanne was scheduled for retirement, and she asked that she could remain on staff to solve the problem as well.

Jeanne Vertefeuille had already tirelessly worked her way up the career ladder over the course of almost forty years before her credentials could have even been considered to lead the Mole Hunt team for Aldrich Ames in the late 1980s. When Vertefeuille first made the jump to an officer role in the 1960s, she said this of her experience:

“Late in my [Helsinki] tour, it became obvious that professional career possibilities for women were opening up. Women were permitted to apply for the Career Training course, the gateway to officer status. There were limitations, however. In the directorate of Operations (DO), women were accepted for only two career tracks—analyst or reports officer. We were not allowed to take the long course that teaches one to become an operations officer, and we were barred from paramilitary training. And there was no parity in numbers. We were seven women out of a total class of sixty-six.”⁵⁹

Jeanne Vertefeuille took the long way to career advancement compared to women such as Martha Peterson, who jumped the ladder using personal connections. Vertefeuille showed by

⁵⁸ Grimes, S., & Vertefeuille, J. (2012). *Circle of Treason*

⁵⁹ Grimes, S., & Vertefeuille, J. (2012). *Circle of Treason*. Page 5.

long-term dedication to the agency and patience, she could eventually reach the same amount of responsibility that many men achieved in a fourth the time that Vertefeuille invested in the agency.

While both women contributed a great deal in the weeds of Counterintelligence during the Cold War, Jeanne Vertefeuille and Sandy Grimes are remembered for their ability to solve a problem that no one else in the agency or FBI could. These two women stuck their ground, even when the FBI was about to come out with a report naming someone other than Aldrich Ames as their number one suspect, and their unique perspective afforded creative and effective ways to narrow down the list of suspects.

Once the mole hunt team had narrowed down their list to 28 names, determined by amount of access to leaked information and other considerations of location and timing, Vertefeuille and Grimes took to interviewing people within the agency and sent a questionnaire to the mole hunt team to rank the suspect list by those who made them generally “uneasy.”⁶⁰ Though not a scientific method by any means, this initial test proved successful in identifying Rick Ames as no.1 on the weighted and combined list. Vertefeuille and Grimes did not use this information as their deciding factor, rather they conducted extensive research into the financials and activities of five main suspects, but their perceptive nature in interviews with Ames and ability to look into the psychology and motivating factors ensured that the right man was arrested in the long run.

Why Did [They] Persevere?

⁶⁰ Shapira, I. (2018, January 26). “Rick is a goddamn Russian spy”: Does the CIA have a new Aldrich Ames on its hands? *Washington Post*.

Jeanne Vertefeuille and Sandy Grimes persevered in part because of male superiors who saw their potential, a desire to seek out challenging work opportunities, and finally because of the community and camaraderie they had with each other.

Paul Redmond played a major role in assembling the mole hunt team and he was attentive to hear the ideas of both Vertefeuille and Grimes out as they developed modes of identifying the information leak. When the two women were convinced of their hunch that Aldrich Ames was the CIA mole, it was Redmond who continued to push them to find more evidence, and he often played devil's advocate to ensure they had covered every base in their considerations.

When Jeanne Vertefeuille began working her way up the career ladder from her beginning clerical role, it was the chance for a challenging opportunity and flexibility of her position in life as a single, twenty-something woman that led her to apply for a position in Helsinki of higher responsibility, as a GS-09, than many other roles available to women in the CIA in the 1950s.⁶¹

Finally, Jeanne Vertefeuille and Sandy Grimes became such kindred spirits through their work together, that they even wrote a book together about their experience, entitled *Circle of Treason*. Throughout the often-frustrating process of searching for a mole and reaching many dead-ends along the way, Jeanne and Sandy continued supporting one another, and any time that Sandy Grimes talks about her CIA career publicly, she is quick to mention the lasting impact of Jeanne Vertefeuille and the way Jeanne would say "Sandy gets the Gold Star"⁶² when Grimes guessed Aldrich Ames as the first suspect early on into their search.

⁶¹ Grimes, S., & Vertefeuille, J. (2012). *Circle of Treason*

⁶² *The People of the CIA ... Ames Mole Hunt Team*. (2009, March 12). Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/featured-story-archive/ames-mole-hunt-team.html>

Jennifer Matthews / Liz Hanson

By the time Jennifer Matthews and Liz Hanson began working for the Central Intelligence Agency, female officers already had a well-established presence within the agency. Both women brought insight and extensive dedication to their roles, but the stories of these officers are immortalized because Jennifer Matthews and Liz Hanson were not only subject matter experts and key assets to the Central Intelligence Agency's counterterrorism efforts, but they were key stakeholders in one of the deadliest internal intelligence failures in the CIA's recent history.

The fear of being wrong is one that haunts any risk-taker, especially in the high-stakes atmosphere of Intelligence. During the War on Terror in the early 2000s, American Intelligence officers were anxious for any information that would assist in preventing another attack like in New York City on September 11, 2001.

In 2009, US Intelligence services were convinced of the potential gold mine of information that Jordanian doctor Khalil al-Balawi could allow, and the doctor provided many indications of being a worthy investment in terms of exposure to high-ranking leaders within al-Qaeda and his expressed interest in cooperating with American forces. The CIA team chose to expedite a meeting and afford Balawi certain requests in order to put him at ease rather than miss an opportunity for contact with a man who appeared to be a valuable ally. However, on December 30, 2009, Balawi showed up at the US Military base in Khost, Afghanistan wearing an explosive vest and he revealed his true allegiance to al-Qaeda by killing himself and the CIA team and US military personnel present in a suicide bombing.⁶³

⁶³ Warrick, Joby. *The Triple Agent: The Al-Qaeda Mole Who Infiltrated the CIA*. Vintage Books, 2012. The first footnote is from the Introduction of the book, and the second is from page 24.

Origin

Jennifer Matthews' peers described her as "passionate and direct, but also impatient and stubborn."⁶⁴ Matthews was known for helping bust the al-Qaeda plot in 2006 to use liquids as bombs on US-bound airline jets during her time in the CIA's London office following the tragedy of 9/11.⁶⁴ Officers who worked under Matthews in the London office tried to keep up with her extensive subject matter knowledge, and Matthews challenged all of her peers to continue working harder. One British colleague reflected on their time working under her, saying, "I could always tell which of my office mates had met with Jennifer on any day... It was always the busiest person in the room."⁶⁵ Matthews had been in Afghanistan just three months when the bombing took place in 2009.

Elizabeth Hanson was younger than Jennifer Matthews when she began serving in Afghanistan at barely thirty, and Liz's personality presented a unique balance between a joking demeanor that permeated the office during long hours spent combing through massive amounts of data and a seriousness with which she tracked the CIA's most wanted terrorists and led peers within the Counterterrorism Center.

The difference between the CIA environment Matthews and Hanson entered into was described as follows,

"Matthews had joined a vastly different CIA in the late 1980s, a place where women still were relatively rare, the Cold War still raged, and most of the glamour jobs were held by male case officers who had secret meetings with informants in seedy bars in Vienna or Budapest. By contrast, Hanson was part of

⁶⁴ Memmott, M. (2010). Year Later, Some Details Emerge About CIA Officer Killed in Afghanistan. *NPR News*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2010/12/27/132365782/year-later-some-details-emerge-about-cia-officer-killed-in-afghanistan>

⁶⁵ Warrick, Joby. *The Triple Agent: The Al-Qaeda Mole Who Infiltrated the CIA*. Warrick conducted interviews with a few colleagues who worked with Matthews in the London office.

a class of new officers hired after September 11. Some referred to themselves as the Windows generation: young, highly educated, and confident in the power of their technology.”⁶⁶

How Did [They] Demonstrate Determination?

Both officers exerted a great level of intentionality on the job and worked extensive hours. An old boss of Matthews even gave her the nickname STRAC, a Navy term which meant “Standing Tall, Ready Around the Clock” for her tireless work ethic.

Officer Matthews had already served 15 years for the agency when she accepted the position in Kabul, Afghanistan, and her decision to serve at this particular site, a place considered to be one of the most dangerous assignments for an American at the time, in the midst of war, was a demonstration of determination in itself. The gaps in Matthew’s resume when being considered for promotion could only be filled by serving a tour in a warzone, and rather than leave her family for three years to serve in Baghdad’s Green Zone, Matthews opted towards the more dangerous post in Afghanistan, because only a year would be required to be away from her children and family.

Even as a young officer in comparison to many of her coworkers, Liz Hanson displayed a level of resolve and confidence of opinion necessary to convince policy makers to take action based on intelligence insights. Many colleagues recalled a conversation between Hanson and an army colonel, when the colonel did not believe the credibility of Hanson’s assertion, and Hanson responded by moving “within inches of his face. ‘The target is correct, sir,’ she said. ‘Either you take it out, or we will.’”⁶⁷ It was that same toughness that continued Hanson’s vertical career trajectory through the agency, as she became a chief targeter, working on over a dozen high-

⁶⁶ This is included by Joby Warrick on page 70 of *The Triple Agent* and the description is based on accounts from CIA coworkers.

⁶⁷ Warrick interviewed five former CIA colleagues of Hanson and two family members.

profile cases and volunteering for the assignment in Afghanistan to track down and kill the top al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders.

Finally, Jennifer Matthews always insisted on a job well done, and on the day Khalil al-Balawi was set to arrive on the US Military base in Khost, Matthews had baked him a cake, knowing Balawi had recently celebrated his birthday. A small gesture of friendship like the cake was unnecessary, but it further demonstrated the intense care Matthews exerted on the job and exercised to the people around her.

Why Did [They] Persevere?

Two main drivers behind Jennifer Matthew's perseverance on the job were the desire to keep climbing the ladder within CIA and to restore her pride after being associated with the massive intelligence failure of 9/11. Both drivers fed into the overall trend of Matthews' actions and mission to prove herself and continue to achieve with the same diligence that she tackled every assignment at the CIA.

As mentioned in the previous section, the question whether to serve in Afghanistan proved to be a defining decision, but Jennifer Matthews did not receive support from every side when making her choice. Although Matthews had the endorsement of senior CIA officials, many colleagues and trusted peers did not see the direct translation of her experience into running covert operations because of her lack of experience in the field. One retired CIA mentor of Matthews offered his opinion of a conversation they shared before Matthews left, saying Afghan tribesmen would not view themselves as equals with Matthews during negotiations, which could also be a disadvantage. The CIA mentor described the situation as follows:

“Matthews' eyes flashed at the suggestion that she as a woman would be at a disadvantage. The conversation became heated, and the more [we] argued, the

more adamant Matthews became. She already know she was going to Afghanistan... I tried to talk her out of it, but she was hearing something else. She thought I was saying she couldn't handle it.”⁶⁸

By all interpretations, Matthews knew and understood her unique and powerful skillset, and she was motivated to persevere in order to leverage her skills to the best of her ability, even to the point of often ignoring constructive feedback. This same facet of Matthews' persona allowed her to be haunted by her involvement in the Intelligence failure of 9/11, because CIA Inspector General, John L. Helgerson, wrote a report on the Counterintelligence failure, naming Jennifer Matthews along with other managers within the CIA as responsible for the lack of communication with FBI prior to the incident, and ultimately Helgerson called for disciplinary action against the people on his list.⁶⁹ Even though top CIA officials pushed back and argued that a few lone individuals should not be held responsible for a collective failure, both outside the CIA and within, Jennifer Matthews still felt ashamed to have her name associated with any kind of culpability for such a tragedy, and she sought to continually earn the respect of her CIA peers going forward.

By all indications, Elizabeth Hanson shared a similar level of stubbornness to Matthews, but Hanson's motivation stemmed from a desire for adventure and learning, as her friends said she was thrilled for the opportunity to live and work in Afghanistan. Hanson's mother said even from a young age her daughter was relatively fearless, and stated at age four that she “wanted to try everything in life, and learn everything there is to learn.”⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Joby Warrick interviewed the CIA mentor of Matthews who spoke to her before she left, but he was unable to provide the name of the contact for security reasons.

⁶⁹ Warrick, Joby. *The Triple Agent: The Al-Qaeda Mole Who Infiltrated the CIA*.

⁷⁰ Memmott, M. (2010). Year Later, Some Details Emerge About CIA Officer Killed in Afghanistan. *NPR News*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2010/12/27/132365782/year-later-some-details-emerge-about-cia-officer-killed-in-afghanistan>

Both Jennifer Matthews and Liz Hanson are included in this thesis not only because of their tireless work ethic and commitment to service in the Central Intelligence Agency, because of the fearlessness with which they approached risks. In many career paths, you take a big risk and lose a million dollars or suffer a short-term consequence, but in the field of intelligence, a big risk can mean facing death head on.⁷¹ Jennifer Matthews and Liz Hanson suffered the long-term consequence of a big risk, but their legacy of courage and commitment cannot long be forgotten.

⁷¹ This is an idea presented by J. Paul Pope, professor at the University of Texas and CIA employee for twenty years.

Gina Haspel / Current Women

As of 2019, with Gina Haspel as Director of the CIA and women constituting 46 percent of all employees in the agency, the CIA continues to grow its balance between genders in the workplace. When the CIA was criticized in the 1980s for its lack of female leadership, only about 10% of the agency's employees consisted of women, so many of the women promoted to higher positions for the sake of agency image many not have always qualified for those positions. Now that the overall pool of female employees has increased in the CIA, it only follows that the amount of women in leadership roles would increase as well.

Origin

As the oldest of five children in a military family from Kentucky, Gina Haspel decided at an early age that she wanted to attend West Point, and it was her father who broke the news that the Academy only admitted men at that time. Haspel continued to pursue big dreams nonetheless, and after attending the University of Kentucky and graduating from the University of Louisville, Gina Haspel wrote a letter to the CIA seeking employment.

Much of Gina Haspel's motivation appears to stem from a deeply rooted belief in service and patriotism. This is evidenced in her statement about her reasoning for joining the Central Intelligence Agency in 1985.

"I wanted to be part of something bigger than just me," she says. "I think with my dad's service in the military, I saw that as a natural affinity. I wanted an overseas adventure where I could put my love of foreign languages to use. CIA delivered."⁷²

⁷² *Get to Know our Deputy Director*. (2018, May 23). Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/featured-story-archive/2018-featured-story-archive/get-to-know-our-deputy-director.html>

How Did She Demonstrate Determination?

In the months leading up to her appointment as Director, Gina Haspel faced extreme public scrutiny because of her involvement with “Black Sites,” or areas operated by the CIA during the Iraqi War where officers used “enhanced interrogation” techniques⁷³, and a Congressional hearing to verify Haspel’s commitment to the ideals held by the individuals leading the US Government’s congressional branch. Upon being sworn in as the new director of the CIA, Gina Haspel shared the following sentiment:

“I am truly honored to have this opportunity to lead the best workforce in government,” Director Haspel said. “It has been nearly 50 years since an operations officer rose up through the ranks to become the Director, and after the experience of the past two months, I think I know why that is,” she joked.⁷⁴

Although Haspel did not give a clear response to her harried interviewer when asked if she approved “enhanced interrogation techniques” during the Congressional confirmation hearing, Haspel held her ground and restated the overall mission of the CIA to aid in preventing terrorist acts against the US. While some sources criticized Gina Haspel’s indirect answers, others acknowledged the intentionally provocative questions from Congress, aimed to elicit a potentially controversial response from Haspel. The new CIA Director was complimented by these same people for remaining composed and defending her agency without stating her explicit endorsement or condemnation of waterboarding, which would have been divisive in either case and would have drawn attention away from her qualified candidacy overall.

⁷³ Timsit, A. (2018, March 14). What Happened at the Thailand “Black Site” Run by Trump’s CIA Pick. *The Atlantic*.

⁷⁴ *CIA Director Gina Haspel Swearing-In Ceremony* [Speech]. (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.c-span.org/video/standalone/?445861-1/gina-haspel-sworn-cia-director>

Gina Haspel responded to the transition between a career of relative invisibility to one of drastic public exposure with humor and joking, demonstrating Haspel's resilience and determination in the face of changing circumstances.

Why Did She Persevere?

Haspel served for 33 years undercover before accepting her current position as Director, and she was so concerned with the overall image of the agency that she almost did not accept the role as Director because of her controversial past working in Afghanistan during the Gulf War⁷⁵. This overall concern for the good of the organization instead of her own status and fame demonstrates Gina Haspel's persistent commitment to a cause bigger than herself.

When asked earlier in her career why she chose to continue working at the Central Intelligence Agency, Haspel said, "Getting to work with these officers is the greatest part of the job," she says. "They are the silent warriors who work ceaselessly to protect America."⁷⁶

Gina Haspel faced skepticism about her credentials from her male colleagues when she became Chief of Station for a small, dangerous capital overseas. Haspel responded with hard work and a determination to protect the US from foreign threats to national security, perhaps in part due to a desire to demonstrate her work efficacy and capability. Haspel's work as Chief of Station won her the George H. W. Bush Award for Excellence in Counterterrorism when she quickly mobilized an operation to capture two terrorist bombers of a nearby embassy.

⁷⁵ Shapira, I. (2018, May 17). New CIA Director Gina Haspel follows in footsteps of legendary female spies. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2018/03/13/a-woman-atop-the-cia-was-once-unthinkable-but-female-spies-have-always-been-remarkable/?utm_term=.00d28fa93a79

⁷⁶ *Get to Know our Deputy Director*. (2018, May 23). Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/featured-story-archive/2018-featured-story-archive/get-to-know-our-deputy-director.html>

As mentioned in her Congressional hearing, one final source of perseverance for Gina Haspel has been the overall desire to stop terrorism and continue the United States' fight against Al-Qaeda.

PART THREE

Boundaries / Sources of Growth

This section will identify the areas where the women mentioned in Part II have either encountered hindrances to their career advancement or areas of opportunity. Many studies have been conducted into the changing overall trend of upward mobility of women within the Central Intelligence Agency, but few have taken time to identify any overlapping factors that contributed to the emergence of the aforementioned female anomalies within the history of American spyecraft. The women included in this study each encountered unique stumbling blocks, yet while their responses are specific to their challenges, there also exists a level of similarity in the situational and personal growth opportunities exercised by Virginia Hall in 1944 and Gina Haspel in 2018, as well as women at different time stamps throughout. By evaluating the similarities and differences between the experiences of the profiled women in this study, perhaps something can be said about the timeless value of bravery in the field of intelligence in the US and how the female experience in espionage was unique in many ways to that of their male counterparts.

Situational Boundaries

As mentioned in Part I, the Central Intelligence Agency was not without gender bias in the workplace, particularly in the early years of the organization. While this was one situational and cultural boundary to the promotion of the women profiled in this report, varying skillsets across genders also contributed to unique advantages that may have initially been interpreted by individuals in power as weaknesses.

Gender Bias in the Workplace

The Central Intelligence Agency recently declassified documents relating to female officers, now that workplace equality has come to the forefront of many public discussions and now that the CIA continues to market itself as an organization that values women. One file released was taken from a CIA women's panel in 1953, and the document stated that,

“The Chairman announced the establishment of a panel of women to examine the career advancement problems of professional and non-professional women throughout the Agency.”⁷⁷

This document exhibits the CIA's knowledge about its existing workplace gender inequality, even if little was accomplished at the time by this panel created by women, for women, to “establish Agency-wide standard criteria with respect to promotions,” as the panel proposed in 1953. This group of women also conducted a study of gender distribution across roles within the CIA in 1953, and found that 86% of clerical roles with a pay grade of GS 3-6 were filled with women, while men occupied 79% of professional roles, roles defined as ones

⁷⁷ Knoelk, D. (1953). *CSB meeting transcript addressing women's panel*. Central Intelligence Agency.

with immediately foreseeable career advancement.⁷⁸ This trend was certainly prevalent across the workplace in the United States in the 1950s, but it provided a barrier to career advancement for women like Elizabeth McIntosh and Jeanne Vertefeuille nonetheless, and it proved the responsibility of these women to recognize the discrepancy and say something to those in power.

In the words of Jeanne Vertefeuille about her experience with the CIA during the Cold War,

“In those days, a woman’s educational background and linguistic accomplishments meant nothing. I minored in German in college, with six years of that language under my belt. I also had two years of French, but my command of it was pretty shaky. However, the only criterion was the ability to type, and that I could certainly do.”⁷⁹

For most of the women profiled in this report who entered the agency before the twenty-first century, the same trend rang true. Educational background mattered little to CIA recruiters, and the women who wrote about the perceived unimportance of their education in retrospect all conveyed a level of frustration about the situation that may point to an added source of motivation they shared while at the agency. Having already challenged themselves intellectually at university, women like Jeanne Vertefeuille and Martha Peterson were eager to reach that same level of intellectual engagement in their careers.

Varying Skillsets Across Men/Women

The situation was different in the CIA’s precursor, the OSS, where women were actually hired for more dynamic responsibilities. The analytic ability of women like Betty McIntosh and

⁷⁸ Central Intelligence Agency. (1953). *Clerical Committee study, distribution of men and women by career tracks*.

⁷⁹ Grimes, S., & Vertefeuille, J. (2012). *Circle of Treason*. Page 2.

her perceptive nature provided a unique opportunity that Bill Donovan capitalized on with his creation of the Morale Operations branch of the Office of Strategic Services. As mentioned in the profile of Betty McIntosh, many more women were hired to the MO branch of the OSS than other areas of the government agency, because Donovan, the OSS Director, saw a potential for successful psychological warfare from well-educated females.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ *What Was OSS?* (2008, June 28). Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/intelligence-history/oss/art03.htm>

Personal Boundaries

The personal boundaries to career advancement within the agency, as observed in the accounts of the women in Part II of the thesis, include time and family sacrifice, individual openness to change, and bravery contingent on opportunity.

Time/Family Sacrifice

It is difficult to start a family and maintain a full-time job, and historically in the United States women have been tasked with staying home to take care of their children up until recently, as gender roles increase in fluidity. For many women, a career did not seem feasible if they also hoped to settle down, and although family is by no means a setback, many women exit the career ladder in favor of raising their children or follow their husband to a different position or job location. Marti Peterson moved with her husband to Laos, and although she had a Master's Degree and higher credentials than some of men in the office where she worked, the wives of male officers were seen as essentially free help, because the women needed something to do while their husbands were serving in the field, and the roles had a relatively high turnover as women left the workplace or followed their husband elsewhere.⁸¹

Individual Openness to Change

Another boundary to career growth was individual openness to change, in part because of the prevailing work culture in the United States and the acceptance of the idea that the gender gap was just the way things were. Jeanne Vertefeuille had a poignant statement about her initial application to work for the CIA and her opinion of her own career possibilities as a woman:

⁸¹ Peterson, M. (2012). *The Widow Spy*. Wilmington, North Carolina: Red Canary Press.

“A typical product of the 1950s, I thought only in passing about equal rights for women and had no overriding visions of a rewarding professional career. My major goal was to work and live abroad, preferably in Europe.”⁸²

Bravery Contingent on Opportunity

Finally, women could prove their merit and exhibit their bravery on the job only if given the opportunity, and in many instances the opportunity just did not exist on its own. Over time and through generational shifts, more opportunities have opened up for women to make an impact and exhibit diverse skill sets, but the door of opportunity could not be slammed back on its hinges all at once, because female bravery looked different in the 1940s than it does in 2019 due to the direct correlation with the amount of opportunity afforded to female workers as a whole. As the proportion of women in the workplace to women at home increases, so too does the likelihood of standout performances and valuable contributions. Featuring Gina Haspel in the Profiles section of the thesis was a difficult decision because of the sheer amount of women in the CIA in 2019 that are demonstrating determination and bravery through service daily, while a simple search of the best female spies during World War II in the OSS warrants very few results. This discrepancy is solely a product of the idea that women could not write stories worth telling in conjunction with the OSS and CIA until they were provided the opportunity to write.

⁸² Grimes, S., & Vertefeuille, J. (2012). *Circle of Treason*

Situational Sources of Growth

Within the OSS and CIA, the position of women posed a unique competitive advantage in terms of stealth, and the potential for female career growth benefitted both from the success of prior women as well as the attention of specific individuals, oftentimes men, who saw the potential in a particular young woman and provided an opportunity for advancement.

Competitive Advantage

Oftentimes hiring a female officer provided a level of stealth because a woman was less likely to be suspected of espionage activities. Although women in the present day might be offended by the notion that foreign enemies underestimated the capabilities of women, prevailing patriarchy was a reality of the time period and overall working culture of most countries and the United States until late into the 20th century. Martha Peterson was the first female case officer to be employed in the USSR during the Cold War in 1975, and her visa application and entry into the country took substantially less time than her male counterparts because the Russian Intelligence service (KGB) had no reason to suspect a woman. After all, the KGB had not employed any female spies up to that point, so in their opinion, why would the CIA employ women?⁸³

Success of Prior Women

Time has played a crucial role in the development of opportunities of CIA opportunities for women, as each new cycle of female employees has taken on more responsibility. In the words of Mary Margaret Graham, a female officer who served as deputy to the director of

⁸³ Peterson, M. (2012). *The Widow Spy*. Wilmington, North Carolina: Red Canary Press.

national intelligence before retiring in 2008, “[The closing gender gap at the CIA] is a generational thing.” She shared her opinion in an interview with the *Washington Post*, that leading CIA women had already reached “all the career steps and had all the experiences. They proved they were ready for bigger and more important jobs.”⁸⁴

For Virginia Hall, the prior success and credibility of Vera Atkins, a British intelligence officer who worked undercover for the Special Operations Executive during World War II, proved essential in gaining the trust of British Intelligence to invest in Hall’s first assignment to Vichy, France.

Specific Superior Who Saw Potential

The prior success of Vera Atkins gave her the authority within the SOE to propose Virginia Hall’s candidacy, and Hall benefitted from the watchful eye of an intelligence officer twice, as it was originally a man working for the SOE who appraised Atkins of Hall’s potential after a happenstance conversation on the train leaving France. Each of the women profiled by this thesis gained the faith of a superior within intelligence at some point, and that support often served as a major differentiating factor in the trajectory of each woman’s career. In many instances, the man or superior who chose to promote each woman did not do so in order to consciously confront the existing gender gap in the CIA, rather that superior recognized the indispensable work of the person in front of them, woman or not, and chose to promote someone they believed would continue in diligence and work efficacy.

The “why” section of each woman’s profile in Part II provides an in depth account of the individuals who provided specific opportunities or invested in each woman, and one such

⁸⁴ Miller, G. (2011, November 10). At CIA, the glass ceiling shows its cracks. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/checkpoint-washington/post/at-cia-the-glass-ceiling-shows-it-cracks/2011/11/10/gIAJEm38M_blog.html?utm_term=.71abb866aef0

example is Paul Redmond and the important role he took in including Sandra Grimes and Jeanne Vertefeuille in his assembly of the Aldrich Ames mole hunt team.

Personal Sources of Growth

The final piece of the puzzle includes personal sources of growth, for oftentimes women would choose to stay at home if not for the support of their families to pursue a career, a particular woman's own willingness to serve, and finally her courage, in many ways on a moral level versus the physical courage oftentimes required of men serving the US government.

Family Support / Love Interest

Family buy-in to the careers of the officers mentioned within this study proved crucial to the continued morale and willingness to serve of women who might otherwise have been forced to take traditional roles "suited" to their gender, as defined by societal norms. For example, one final source of Virginia Hall's determination was the continued support of her parents, particularly early on in her career. Hall's mother wrote weekly letters to Virginia while she was abroad, always including intriguing stories and updates from the United States.⁸⁵ The enduring encouragement from the home front surely reassured Virginia Hall of the freedom with which she could devote herself to her work rather than worrying about the situation on the home front and the condition of her mother without Virginia around.

Similarly, when Jennifer Matthews took her position of service in the Middle East, her husband took on the responsibility of caring for their children in the United States, and assured Officer Matthews that she could focus on work while he stepped in to handle everything on the home front.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Pearson includes this excerpt on page 20 of her book, *The Wolves at the Door*, in 2005.

⁸⁶ Gay Stolberg, Sheryl, and Mark Mazzetti. "Suicide Bombing Puts a Rare Face on C.I.A.'s Work." *New York Times*, 6 Jan. 2010.

For women who were not yet married while serving the OSS or CIA, family and the potential for relationships also provided a source of motivation to continue a job well done. One such example is the love story between Paul and Julia Child, who served with Betty McIntosh in the Pacific Theater. Although both dedicated to their roles within the OSS, Paul and Julia found a newfound source of inspiration from the budding romance between them while on the job. Betty McIntosh's biographer described the interest between Julia and Paul Child during their service in the Pacific as follows:

“After [Paul] had lapsed into a lonesome sulk, it suddenly seemed that wherever Paul turned, ‘Julie’ was there. They hiked the hills, visited the Black Dragon Pool temple, frequented the flower market, and took many a twilight sampan ride on the lake... As the two spent more and more time together, Betty and the others silently cheered them on.”⁸⁷

In the perspective of many male officers such as Paul, working alongside a number of talented, smart women often opened their eyes to the value of female coworkers, and often the buy-in of these men to encourage women's work in the agency added another source of camaraderie amongst the teams serving together.

Willingness to Serve

Another important internal source of growth throughout these profiles has been a woman's willingness to serve the United States through the clandestine service. Gina Haspel knew very early on that she wanted to serve her country in some capacity, asking her father about the likelihood she could attend West Point Military Academy. Virginia Hall practically begged the US Foreign Service to hire her when they denied her application based on her

⁸⁷ Included on Page 151 of Ann Todd's *OSS Operation Black Mail*.

disability, even exhausting family connections to contact President Roosevelt and inform him of her unique case and innate desire to serve her country. Although her appeals proved unsuccessful, Virginia Hall still managed to serve the US government and Allied forces through World War II, mainly because she never shied away from the line of fire. Even when Virginia Hall switched from British SOE to serve the United States in the OSS, she accredited the move to her love of country and desire to represent her nation rather than another, and she also commented on the OSS' willingness to send her back behind enemy lines, while the SOE opted to station her in a safe and "boring," in Virginia's words, position in Madrid.⁸⁸

Courage – Moral vs. Physical

Courage is the final piece that every spy possesses, but it is a trait particularly evident in the determined women profiled in this report. The courage of these women was not in their physical prowess, but rather in their moral toughness to continue working diligently in spite of any existing gender bias, rather than being defined by that bias or fixated on it. One example of this trait is in the story of Liz Hanson, who typically leaned left in her political ideology, and was not a strong believer in war. However, she devoted herself to her job, because in her words, "Whether you approved of the war or not made no difference... You don't run away from a fight, and you always have to take care of the people who are over there, fighting your war."⁸⁹ In the same way that Hanson was still willing to serve despite her disagreement on some overarching ideals behind the prevailing situation, the women included in this study did not allow their opinions of any gender imbalances within the CIA to inhibit their hard work.

⁸⁸ *Virginia Hall: The Courage and Daring of "The Limping Lady."* (2015, October 8)

⁸⁹ Warrick, Joby. *The Triple Agent: The Al-Qadea Mole Who Infiltrated the CIA*. Vintage Books, 2012. Page 97.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the women mentioned in this thesis benefitted not only from their fair share of luck and happenstance in regards to time and place, but they also made their own luck from their demonstration of courage in capitalizing on each situation. If Virginia Hall had not been on the train at the exact same time as an operative from British Intelligence, she may have never received the opportunity to serve the United Kingdom and consequently the United States in covert operations. If Elizabeth McIntosh had been a smoker, she may never have had the bargaining chip of extra cigarettes that proved necessary in persuading a British Intelligence officer to exchange cigarettes for the information that proved invaluable to jumpstart McIntosh's work efficacy.

This study is of course subjective to the opinions of the people and powers holding the pen to record what would otherwise be a classified story or collection of information. In many instances, the Central Intelligence Agency provided the most freely accessible information about its history and impact of its employees. This information only served to edify the agency's own reputation and public image when censored effectively, and for an agency whose field of work relies on putting up fronts, the CIA is known to be methodical about what information to disclose to the public. Even the personal accounts and books written by the women of this study encountered an extensive censoring process run by the CIA. Without complete information regarding the individual situations included, this thesis can not be considered a completely neutral interpretation of the moral character of all of the women included.

However, the actions of these women proved something, whether or not their colleagues deemed their work "successful." In the book *Circle of Treason*, by Sandy Grimes and Jeanne Vertefuille, both women restate their reasoning behind many of their critical decisions during the

Ames mole hunt in response to the skepticism from outside parties. One such example was their defense against the accusations made by Congress members and FBI administration in retrospect about the timing of Grimes and Vertefuille in their collaboration with the FBI.

Overall, the feminine bravery of the officers mentioned in this work allowed for other women to continue pushing the boundary of responsibility, little by little.

“I would be remiss if I did not also note the tremendous pride I take in being the first woman to serve as Director. I would not be standing before you today if not for the remarkable courage and dedication displayed by generations of OSS and Agency women. In roles both large and small, they challenged stereotypes, broke down barriers, and opened doors for the rest of us. I am deeply indebted to them, and I am extremely proud to follow in their footsteps and to carry on their extraordinary legacy.”

Gina Haspel⁹⁰

⁹⁰ *CIA Director Gina Haspel Swearing-In Ceremony* [Speech]. (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.c-span.org/video/standalone/?445861-1/gina-haspel-sworn-cia-director>

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Baime, A.J. "The CIA's Female Spy Question." *History Network*, May 2018, <https://www.history.com/news/cia-women-spy-leaders>.

Baime provides an overarching look at the female spies in the CIA, from Adelaide Hawkins, a cryptographic clerk for the OSS in 1941, to Gina Haspel, the first female director of the CIA. This article afforded me the names of many trailblazing women to focus on within my thesis and a bit of information about each one and the work atmosphere surrounding each one.

Barbier, Mary Kathryn. "Hall, Virginia." *Encyclopedia of Intelligence & Counterintelligence*, Rodney P. Carlisle, Routledge, 1st edition, 2005. *Credo Reference*, http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/sharpint/hall_virginia/0?institutionId=4864.

An excerpt from the Encyclopedia of Intelligence & Counterintelligence, this brief piece about Virginia Hall provided a concise version of her contributions to the war effort in WWII and the impact she had on U.S. Intelligence.

Bureau of Labor Statistics, & US Department of Labor. (n.d.). Median weekly earnings of female full-time wage and salary workers in the United States from 1979 to 2017 (in current U.S. dollars).

In Statista - The Statistics Portal.

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Grimes, S., & Vertefeuille, J. (2012). *Circle of Treason*.

From Typist to Trailblazer: The Evolving View of Women in the CIA's Workforce. (2019, April 4).

Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/collection/typist-trailblazer>

Gay Stolberg, Sheryl, and Mark Mazzetti. "Suicide Bombing Puts a Rare Face on C.I.A.'s Work."

New York Times, 6 Jan. 2010.

This article from the New York Times was an immediate response to the bombing that happened in Afghanistan, killing a handful of CIA officers and allowing their identities to be released to the public. Among these CIA officers were Jennifer Matthews and Elizabeth Hanson, two women who I hope to highlight in my thesis.

Grimes, Sandra, and Jeanne Vertefeuille. *Circle of Treason*. 2012.

This book is written by two women who were integral in the pursuit of CIA mole Aldrich Ames. The women, Sandra Grimes and Jeanne Vertefeuille, recount their individual careers in the CIA and provide a comprehensive account of their work for the agency. This source will provide substantial information regarding the work of these two women and details on their work environment.

Lineberry, Cate. "Wanted: The Limping Lady." *Smithsonian.Com*, Feb. 2007,

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/wanted-the-limping-lady-146541513/>.

Cate Lineberry writes about the achievements of Virginia Hall, calling her America's "most heroic and dangerous female spy." Although the article is biased in its pursuit to provide an engaging story about an almost legendary woman, Lineberry provides substantial factual information as well.

McIntosh, Elizabeth. "The Role of Women in Intelligence." *Association of Former Intelligence Officers*, 1989,

<https://www.afio.com/publications/monographs/McIntosh%20Elizabeth%20Role%20of%20Women%20in%20Intelligence%20AFIO%20Monograph%205.pdf>.

This piece by Elizabeth McIntosh, an important OSS employee in World War II, provides the stories of female spies across the world, and follows the roles of women through the intelligence agencies of many different countries. The most information is provided about American intelligence, and the author is someone with a firm belief in the merit of American intelligence agencies, but the piece still offers historically accurate information.

McPherson, M. (1978, June 21). The Girl Next Door Comes in From the Cold. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from

https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1978/06/21/the-girl-next-door-comes-in-from-the-cold/744eb489-f645-4c0b-938c-814ab9b9fa52/?utm_term=.8d91b0b28ca4

Memmott, M. (2010). Year Later, Some Details Emerge About CIA Officer Killed in Afghanistan.

NPR News. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2010/12/27/132365782/year-later-some-details-emerge-about-cia-officer-killed-in-afghanistan>

Miller, G. (2011, November 10). At CIA, the glass ceiling shows its cracks. *Washington Post*.

Newburger, E. (2019). Women head the top three CIA directorates for the first time in history. *CNBC*.

This article talks about the fact that women have taken over the top three positions at the CIA, with Gina Haspel is serving as CIA director, DiDi Rapp as deputy director of analytics, Elizabeth Kimber as deputy director of operations, and Sonya Holt as chief diversity and inclusion officer.

Office of Strategic Services Records. (2018, December 20). Retrieved from

<https://www.archives.gov/research/military/ww2/oss>

Ostrow, R. (1994, October 10). The CIA's Dirty Little Secret: A female agent's lawsuit has opened a

window to the frat house culture among male spies. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from

<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1994-10-10-mn-48728-story.html>

Patterson, M. J. (2016). Marti Peterson '67 says she enrolled at Drew "to grow up and have a good

time." What happened next was less expected: a life as a CIA agent with assignments in Cold

War Moscow and beyond. *Drew Magazine*.

Pearson, Judith. *The Wolves at the Door: The True Story of America's Greatest Female Spy*. Lyons

Publishing, 2005.

More than fifty years after Virginia Hall's espionage in World War II, this book was published to recognize this woman and provide insight into her life and career in Foreign Intelligence. The book takes liberties in describing situations and providing details for the sake of the story that may not be completely factual, but the author consulted Virginia Hall's daughter, the National Archives, International Spy Museum, and many other people who knew Virginia Hall and experienced her bravery firsthand.

Perry, J. (2003, January 27). "We must find and destroy her." *U.S. News & World Report*, 134(3), 59.

Peterson, M. (2012). *The Widow Spy*. Wilmington, North Carolina: Red Canary Press.

Quest, L. (2016). *Women in the Public Sector: Ahead of the curve but room for improvement*.

Retrieved from Oliver Wyman website: https://www.oliverwyman.com/content/dam/oliver-wyman/global/en/2016/june/WiFS/WiFS_2016_PUBLICSECTOR_Pages.pdf

Rosenfield, S., Vertefuille, J., & Mcalpine, D. (2000). Gender Stratification and Mental Health: An

Exploration of Dimensions of the Self. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 63(3), 208–223.

Shapira, Ian. "CIA Sisterhood: One Spy Cared for Her Dying Colleague, an Agency Pioneer."

Washington Post, 15 Jan. 2013.

The author provides a personal take on the relationship between Sandy Grimes and Jeanne Vertefeuille, two women who worked for the CIA in the mole hunt for Aldrich Ames. The bond between these women extended beyond the workplace, and this article can provide closure to the story of these women when writing about them in my thesis.

---. "For CIA Family, a Deadly Suicide Bombing Leads to Painful Divisions." *Washington Post*, 28 Jan. 2012.

This article provides a more personal take on the life and death of Jennifer Matthews, citing quotes from her husband about the suicide bombing in 2009 that took his wife's life. The author takes a defensive stance in preserving the woman's legacy and calls out those who belittled her ability as a case officer because she was a woman.

---. (2018, May 17). New CIA Director Gina Haspel follows in footsteps of legendary female spies.

The Washington Post. Retrieved from

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2018/03/13/a-woman-atop-the-cia-was-once-unthinkable-but-female-spies-have-always-been-remarkable/?utm_term=.00d28fa93a79

Sisterhood of Spies. C-Span, 18 Nov. 2009, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?290136-1/sisterhood-spies>.

This interview with Elizabeth McIntosh provides the author's take on her book, Sisterhood of Spies, and reasoning for writing this story of legendary women in America's World War II Intelligence service, the OSS.

"Spy Girl" Betty McIntosh Turns 100 Years Old. (2015, March 3). Retrieved from

<https://www.cia.gov/news-information/featured-story-archive/2015-featured-story-archive/2015spy-girl2015-betty-mcintosh-turns-100-years-old.html>

The People of the CIA ... Ames Mole Hunt Team. Central Intelligence Agency, 12 Mar. 2009.

This historical document from the CIA provides a brief background on the career of infamous mole Aldrich Ames and the team that uncovered his identity. This team included Sandy Grimes and Jeanne Vertefeuille, two women who worked their way up from clerical positions to roles of influence in seeking out the leak in the agency.

Timsit, A. (2018, March 14). What Happened at the Thailand “Black Site” Run by Trump’s CIA Pick.

The Atlantic. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/03/gina-haspel-black-site-torture-cia/555539/>

Todd, Ann. *Elizabeth McIntosh and OSS Operation Black Mail*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9IH-42ybYs>. International Spy Museum.

Ann Todd gave this video presentation at the International Spy Museum about her book OSS Operation Black Mail, giving a thirty-minute overview of the life and work of Elizabeth “Bettie” McIntosh during her career with the OSS. By fostering a personal relationship with Mrs. McIntosh, Ann Todd tried to preserve the authenticity and truth of Bettie’s experiences, as she experienced them.

---. *OSS Operation Black Mail*. Naval Institute Press, 2017.

This book focuses on Elizabeth “Bettie” McIntosh, who worked in the Pacific theater during World War II for the OSS, a precursor to the CIA. Bettie McIntosh worked on Black Propaganda, which included the distribution of persuasive material to the Japanese population in attempts to dissuade Japanese commonfolk from following the influence of the militaristic state.

Warrick, Joby. *The Triple Agent: The Al-Qadea Mole Who Infiltrated the CIA*. Vintage Books, 2012.

The Triple Agent is about the suicide bomber, Humam Khalil al-Balawi, who killed a group of the CIA’s top officers at a base in Khost, Afghanistan in 2009. The book focuses on the events leading up to and following the final act of the rising spy, and the author also provides background to the CIA officers working with Balawi, including Jennifer Matthews and Elizabeth Hanson.

Windrem, R. (2019, November 5). Sisterhood of Spies: Women Now Hold the Top Positions at the CIA. *NBC News*.

BIOGRAPHY

Gabby Crank was born in Dallas, Texas in 1996 to a family of two trailblazing older sisters, a radiant, selfless mother, and one outnumbered, outright thankful dad. She enrolled at the University of Texas in fall 2015 as a Plan II Honors and Business Honors student, and found herself attending as many races as classes during four years as a varsity athlete on the Track & Field and Cross Country teams. After graduation in Spring 2019, she plans to race the 800 meters a few more times in the burnt orange before beginning a career in Management Consulting in Denver, Colorado.